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Chairman: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 47 TO 65 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

The CHAIRMAN: The first speaker on my list for this morning's meeting is the representative of Austria, Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner, who, in his capacity as current Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, will introduce the Commission's report.

Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria), Chairman of the Disarmament Commission: In my capacity as the current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I have the honour to introduce the Commission's report on its 1991 session (A/46/42).

As in previous years, the report consists of four chapters. They are, respectively: Introduction, Organization and work of the 1991 session, Documentation and conclusions, and Reports of subsidiary bodies. Chapter IV contains the reports of the four working groups, which sum up the deliberations held and the progress achieved on the four agenda items.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Chairman, Disarmament Commission)

This year's report of the Disarmament Commission also includes three annexes. Annex I contains the Chairman's suggested text on "Guidelines for objective information on military matters" plus two appendices; annex II is the Chairman's paper of Working Group II; annex III is the Chairman's paper of Working Group III.

In the 1991 session the Disarmament Commission carried out its work in accordance with its mandate, as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, and with paragraph 3 of resolution 37/78 H. The reform adopted by resolution 44/119 C, and contained in its annex, "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", were implemented for the first time in this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Pursuant to the adopted reform, which limits the Commission's working agenda to a maximum of four substantive items for in-depth consideration, the Disarmament Commission had decided at its 1990 organizational session to include the following four items in the working agenda of its 1991 session: Objective information on military matters; Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons; Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security; and The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields.

The agenda item "Objective information on military matters" was the only "old" item; the other three items were on the Commission's agenda for the first time. Four working groups were established, each to deal with one of the agenda items.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Chairman, Disarmament Commission)

In their opening statements numerous delegations anticipated that substantial progress would already be achieved in the first year in which the Commission was to work within its new organizational framework. The concentration of the Commission's work on four well-defined subject matters enabled the Chairmen of the Working Groups as well as interested delegations to initiate their preparations in a timely manner. This was of particular relevance for the three new items on the agenda. An early start of the informal consultations on the outline of the Working Groups, as well as on their substance, further facilitated the work during the substantive session.

The great interest all delegations showed in the work of this year's session of the Commission was clearly reflected by the large number of working papers submitted. Considerable input was also made during the lively discussions which took place in the Working Groups.

In their concluding remarks some delegations expressed the feeling that the results achieved in the end had been sobering. During some stages of the deliberations a wider consensus had seemed possible. Nevertheless, as I remarked in my concluding statement, this should in no way diminish the importance of the comprehensive discussion which has taken place and which can be expected to continue over the next two years.

With respect to the only "old" item, the one on objective information on military matters, detailed discussion made it possible to identify major areas of common understanding. During next year's session deliberations will build on this year's consensus. Thus we should then be able to finalize our task by adopting relevant principles and guidelines on this item.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Chairman, Disarmament Commission)

Nuclear disarmament had generally been considered the most problematic item in our forum. Although remarkable progress has been achieved between the two most important nuclear-weapons States, the recent bilateral achievements on the issue of nuclear disarmament have not yet been translated into the multilateral disarmament machinery. Thus the discussions in the relevant Working Group once again oscillated around well-known positions, without taking into consideration the profound changes which had occurred in the global security balance. It might be up to next year's Chairman of this Working Group to capitalize on the recently reassessed security perceptions and to introduce them into the discussion.

The issue of regional disarmament within the context of global security drew substantial attention. It also succeeded in stimulating intense participation by a large number of delegations. It could hardly be expected that the deliberations on this item, which was on the Commission's agenda for the first time this year, would already result in concrete recommendations. It seems to me, though, that the quality of discussions held on the question of regional disarmament reflected the growing consideration which regional aspects of disarmament has been drawing lately. A compilation of general elements of the subject, which emerged during the course of deliberations on the agenda item, is listed in the Chairman's paper, annexed to the report.

In Working Group IV the role of science and technology in relation to international security and disarmament was thoroughly discussed. The relevant report contains a procedural section as well as a compilation of the substantial debate which took place on the four sub-items of the topic. The

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Chairman, Disarmament Commission)

report also summarizes the submitted working papers. Although the deliberations were considered useful, the complex, wide-ranging and challenging mandate, encompassing matters that had never before been dealt with in a systematic debate in the United Nations will require further efforts during the next session.

In a general assessment of the work of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, the implementation of the adopted reform programme has to be considered successful. The 1991 session of the Disarmament Commission achieved considerable progress on many items, frequently stopping just short of consensus. I see good reasons for confidence that the remaining time, allocated to the four agenda items, should produce concrete results.

I should like to remark that the pre-session consultations held by the Chairmen of the four Working Groups greatly facilitated the Commission's work. These consultations, as well as frequent meetings of the Bureau, also contributed to the smooth organization. A careful scheduling of meetings, furthermore, increased the efficient utilization of conference services throughout the 1991 substantive session.

Let me finally express my deep gratitude to all delegations for their interested participation and for the businesslike manner in which they conducted their work during the Disarmament Commission's 1991 session. I should like to pay a special tribute to the members of the Bureau of the Commission - in particular, the eight Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur, Mr. Bahman Naimi Arfa of the Islamic Republic of Iran - for their valuable cooperation.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Chairman, Disarmament Commision)

The Chairmen of the four Working Groups have contributed immensely to the success achieved. Thus, I would like to pay my very special respects to Ambassador André Erdös of Hungary; His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Foreign Minister of Egypt, who, at the time of the 1991 substantive session, was still serving his country as Permanent Representative to the United Nations; as well as to his deputy, Mr. Sameh Hassan Shoukry, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia and Ambassador Luiz de Araujo Castro of Brazil.

I would particularly like to thank my dear friend Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the generous support he has given to our work. On behalf of the Commission, I also express sincere thanks to the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, as well as the Secretaries of the four Working Groups for their most valuable assistance. I would like to express my great appreciation to all the other members of the Secretariat who assisted the Commission in carrying out its task.

I now present the annual report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as contained in document A/46/42.

Mr. HOU Zhitong (China) (interpretation from Chinese): At the outset, I should like to express, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, our warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also wish warmly to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I am confident that, with your distinguished talent, extensive knowledge and rich experience, you will guide the work of the Committee to success. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Rana of Nepal, for his contribution to the First Committee at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

At present, the international situation and world structure are witnessing great and profound changes, and the world has entered a period of transition from the old structure to a new one. In recent years, United States-Soviet relations have relaxed and the military confrontation between the East and the West has been weakened. The dark cloud of the Gulf crisis has already dispersed. Some burning issues in the Asia-Pacific region are moving towards political settlement, and the situation in southern Africa is continuing to ease up. All these developments have been welcomed by the international community.

However, people are also keenly aware of the fact that the world is far from being one of peace and tranquility. Problems of instability and turbulence have become more prominent in the world situation. The contradictions between the North and South have been further aggravated by the widening of the economic gap between them and the greater disparity between the rich and poor. Today, over one billion people around the world are still living in absolute poverty, and many are struggling for survival against starvation and disease. New conflicts are arising with the exacerbation of ethnic, racial and religious clashes in a number of countries, including in Europe. The national independence and territorial integrity of some countries are under threat while intense civil strife and political turmoil have caused serious damage to others. In a word, international security, peace and development still face serious challenges. All this has elicited the deep concern of the international community.

Faced with such a complex situation, the peoples of the world have grown more concerned with the questions of peace, development, security and disarmament. They all wish to see the establishment of a new international order that will make our world a better one to live in. The establishment of

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a peaceful, stable, just and equitable new international order is in harmony with the will of the people and meets the needs of the times.

It is the view of the Chinese Government that a genuinely just and equitable new international order should conform to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as to those norms that have proved practical in guiding inter-State relations and are widely accepted by the international community. Experience in international relations has shown that the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence have crystallized the spirit and purposes of the Charter and correctly outlined the most fundamental norms governing international relations. They reflect the characteristics essential to a new type of international relations. We therefore maintain that the new international order envisaged should be established on the basis of these principles.

The theme "peace, security and disarmament" to be deliberated by this Committee is closely linked to the establishment of a new international order. In order to go further into this question with other delegations, here I wish to state the Chinese Government's principled positions and stands.

China is of the view that the development of each country and the progress of mankind both require above all a peaceful and stable international environment. Historical experience has shown that the following elements are essential to the maintenance of world peace. All countries should respect each other's sovereignty, treat each other as equals and try to seek common ground while putting aside differences, carrying out friendly cooperation and living in harmony. No country should seek hegemony, try to manipulate international affairs, or pursue power politics. All countries should observe

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the principle of mutual respect for territorial integrity and the inviolability of national borders, and no country should be allowed to invade or annex the territories of other countries. Disputes between States should be settled in a reasonable manner by peaceful means rather than by the use or threat of force.

We also hold that the new international order should ensure general international security. Thus, the following principles must be abided by. The security of all regions - East or West, North or South - is equally valuable and should be treated as such. The security of all States - large or small, strong or weak, rich or poor - is equally important. Such practices as the big bullying the small, the strong lording it over the weak, and the rich oppressing the poor should be effectively rejected. Each and every country is a sovereign member of the international community entitled to participate in the discussion and settlement of international affairs on an equal footing. Every State has the right to choose independently its own social, political and economic systems and its own path of development in light of its own national conditions. No country should impose its own values, ideology or mode of development on other countries.

Such a new international order undoubtedly conforms to the fundamental interests of the peoples of all countries. China is willing to work with other Member States and to make its own contribution to establishing a new international order.

Stopping the arms race and realizing effective disarmament are important components in the endeavour to establish a new international order. China has always pursud an independent foreign policy of peace and has made untiring efforts to maintain world peace and security. China has always opposed the

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arms race and stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear, space, chemical and biological weapons, and for banning research on and development of any new type of weapon of mass destruction. We are also in favour of the drastic reduction of conventional weapons. China has adopted a constructive attitude on questions of arms control and disarmament and taken, on its own initiative, a series of practical actions.

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The Chinese Government always attaches great importance and devotes its efforts to the promotion of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war and it has never evaded its own responsibilities. On the very first day that it came into possession of nuclear weapons China solemnly declared that at no time and under no circumstances would China be the first to use nuclear weapons, and that it would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-free zones.

China hopes that all the nuclear-weapon States will declare solemnly that they undertake the same commitment unconditionally. China proposes the conclusion of an international convention on the non-first use of nuclear weapons and the conclusion of international legal instruments on the non-use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-free zones. We hope that China's proposal will receive a positive response.

The Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade emphasizes that nuclear disarmament still enjoys the highest priority and that we must continue urgently to seek early reductions in, and the eventual elimination of, nuclear weapons. In resolution 45/58 D, adopted by consensus at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals are urged to continue to discharge their special responsibilities by taking the lead in halting the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and in drastically reducing at an early date all types of nuclear weapons they have deployed. This will create conditions for the convening of a broadly representative international conference on nuclear disarmament with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States.

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Three months ago, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Recently, the heads of State of the two countries have announced some positive measures and proposals concerning the reduction, limitation and control of nuclear weapons. These are new steps towards meeting the requests contained in the General Assembly resolution. This is a welcome event and we hope that these measures will be put into effect as soon as possible and that the process of nuclear-arms control and nuclear disarmament will be accelerated.

For the purpose of safeguarding world peace and international security and stability, the Chinese Government follows a consistent policy of not advocating, encouraging or engaging in nuclear proliferation and of not helping other countries develop nuclear weapons. In September 1990, China attended the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as an observer. Last August, the Chinese Government declared its decision in principle to accede to the NPT.

The Chinese Government has always adopted a positive, prudent and responsible policy in international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), China strictly abides by the Statute of the Agency. China requires the States that are recipients of its nuclear exports to provide a guarantee that the nuclear materials imported from China will be used only for peaceful purposes. China signed an agreement with the Agency under which it voluntarily places some of its nuclear facilities under the Agency's safeguards. By doing so, China has made a positive contribution to the prevention of nuclear proliferation.

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China has all along supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace by the countries concerned in various regions on the basis of their own agreement through negotiations. We maintain that all nuclear-weapon States should respect the status of nuclear-weapon-free zones and undertake corresponding obligations, as this represents an effective measure which contributes to the security and stability of all regions and promotes nuclear disarmament. On the basis of this principled stand, China signed and ratified the relevant additional protocols under the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and supports the proposals for the establishment of nuclear-free zones in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, the Korean peninsula and other regions.

It was pointed out in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly during its last session that "the qualitative aspect of the arms race needs to be addressed along with its quantitative aspect" (resolution 45/58 D, para. 10). The adoption of resolution 45/55 A indicates that the question of halting the arms race and preventing its extension to outer space has been put on the disarmament agenda as a pressing issue. China maintains that there should be a complete prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction, including any new types of weapons of mass destruction. China supports the early negotiation and conclusion of an international agreement on a complete ban on outer-space weapons so that outer space will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes for the benefit of mankind.

China has always been of the view that it is also imperative that the drastic reduction in conventional armaments be carried out along with vigorous efforts to promote nuclear disarmament. We welcome the Treaty on Conventional

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Armed Forces in Europe, the region with the highest concentration of armaments in the world. It is hoped that the armed forces, weapons and equipment reduced in one region will not be transferred to other regions; any bilateral or multilateral agreement on arms control and disarmament should contribute to the maintenance of the peace and security of all States and regions. The time has come for the drastic reduction and complete withdrawal of all military forces deployed in foreign territories and for the dismantling of foreign military bases.

We are pleased to point out that the Third Review Conference on the Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons recently held in Geneva was a success and the final Declaration adopted at the Conference will help to further enhance the effectiveness of the Convention. At present, the negotiations on a convention on the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of chemical weapons are accelerating and proceeding in depth. Thanks to the joint efforts of both Member States and non-member States, notable progress has been made in the negotiations, though some divergencies and difficulties remain.

China is a non-chemical-weapon State and has been a victim of chemical weapons in the past. We have always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all chemical weapons and an early realization of the goal of a world free of chemical weapons. The Chinese Government attaches great importance to, and has actively participated in, the negotiations on the convention on chemical weapons and has put forward a series of constructive proposals.

In-depth negotiations are going on at the Conference on Disarmament on such important issues as challenge inspection, inspection of civilian chemical

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

industries, organization of the convention, abandoned chemical weapons and assistance to States parties under the threat of chemical weapons. It needs to be pointed out that, like many other Governments, the Chinese Government also emphasizes, among other things, the importance and urgency of a fair solution to the question of abandoned chemical weapons. We are ready to accelerate, together with other parties, the negotiations in a serious, responsible and businesslike spirit for an early conclusion of the convention. China will, as always, continue to make its contribution to the early conclusion of a universal convention on the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all chemical weapons.

Due attention should also be given by this Committee to the restriction of international arms trade and to an increase in openness and transparency in military matters and the arms trade, with a view to building mutual confidence and promoting common security.

(Mr. Hou Zhitong, China)

We maintain that, while addressing these issuues, they should be considered together with other aspects of disarmament and security. In this connection, the same principle of a fair, reasonable, comprehensive and balanced approach should be strictly abided by. The largest arms exporting countries should take the lead to adopt effective self-restraint measures and drastically reduce their arms exports. Acts of infringing upon the sovereignty and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, or supporting secessionist activities through arms sales, should be prevented. The relevant measures should genuinely serve the interest of security and stability of all countries and regions and the world as a whole.

China attaches importance to regional disarmament and has always held that bilateral, regional and multilateral disarmament should complement each other. We believe that participation in appropriate activities of regional arms control and disarmament by countries in the light of the specific conditions of their region will promote peace and development of the region. The focus of current regional disarmament, as pointed out in resolution 45/58 C, adopted by consensus, is in regions with high concentrations of armaments.

We live in a diversified world in which historical, political, economic and social development backgrounds vary from region to region. Arrangments for disarmament in different regions should be made in line with the specific conditions of the regions concerned rather than adopting a single formula.

China maintains that the military forces of all countries should be used solely for self-defence and no countries should seek armaments exceeding their reasonable defence needs. We support the proposal for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction; we are also in favour of the realization of arms control in the Middle East through

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consultations and negotiations among the countries concerned on an equal footing based on the principle of a comprehensive and balanced approach so that just and lasting peace will be established in the region. Opinions and proposals of different countries in the region should be fully respected and heeded. The monopoly of affairs by a few countries and imposition of their views on others should be prevented. Arms control in the Middle East should be linked to the Middle East peace process. The United Nations should bring its rightful role into full play and should convene, when necessary, a conference on arms control in the Middle East with the participation of all the countries concerned.

The task is arduous and the road long for the people throughout the world struggling to safeguard peace and security and to establish a new international order. The world is faced with new challenges as well as opportunities and hopes. The Chinese delegation will participate in the work of the First Committee in a serious and businesslike manner and one of constructive cooperation. We will energetically support all motions, proposals and recommendations which are in the interest of peace, security and disarmament and which seek to establish a just and equitable new international order. Together with other delegations, we are ready to make our due contribution to the success of the work of the Committee and to new progress in promoting security and disarmament.

Mr. TOTH (Hungary): I should like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, most warmly on your election to the important post of Chairman of the First Committee and offer you my delegation's cooperation in fulfilling your challenging mandate.

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

The issue of the prohibition of attacks against nuclear facilities has always been the subject of serious consideration and received a remarkable degree of attention in many multilateral forums. This problem has a constant place on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and was also discussed within the framework of the Review Conferences of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at the General Conferences of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and, of course, here in the First Committee. It is now commonly recognized that any armed attack on nuclear facilities could potentially lead to a massive release of radioactive substances. The consequences of such a release - so painfully proved by the pattern of the Chernobyl accident - would afflict not only the immediate surrounding area and the country that was the first victim, but neighbouring and more distant countries might be endangered by nuclear pollution as well.

Oddly enough, neither that recognition nor the considerable time and attention devoted to this issue has yet resulted in tangible achievements. After long years of negotiations, there is still no light at the end of the tunnel. The stagnation and inability in this field is even more striking in comparison to the flexibility and quick reaction of the international nuclear energy community with regard to the Chernobyl accident in elaborating the respective Conventions on the early notification of a nuclear accident and on assistance in the case of a nuclear emergency.

However, some positive elements have emerged in the wake of our common efforts. Delegations at the Conference on Disarmament and other forums witnessed the birth of a number of constructive ideas, providing useful bases

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

for further negotiations. It should also be noted that the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention of 1949 already provide for a limited protection of works and installations containing dangerous substances, including nuclear electricity-generating stations. Thus, what we need at this point is not a carte blanche approach but a thorough analysis of the situation and the further requirements from the political, technical, legal and practical standpoints.

Clearly, the problem of prohibition of attacks on nuclear facilities is primarily a subject for political decision-making. Events of the past year have certainly exerted a degree of influence on the political atmosphere of the negotiations. Some of them might be disadvantageous, but taking into account the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the Paris Declaration, the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) Treaty, the recent initiatives for sweeping cuts in nuclear arsenals and the continuing trend towards cooperation amongst former political and military rivals, the overall picture is obviously positive.

At the same time, the beneficial overall political mood is not in itself sufficient to solve the problems that lie ahead. The basis for any prohibition must be a clear-cut scope that is both politically feasible and practically applicable. We must frankly admit that so far the Conference on Disarmament has not been successful in its efforts to elaborate such a scope. Taking a closer look at this problem, the conclusion emerges that a prohibition should be global in order to be effective. However, it seems that an absolutely wide scope including all nuclear facilities has proved unsuccessful in meeting any of the requirements.

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

The issue of prohibition of attacks against nuclear facilities has also received considerable attention within the framework of the NPT follow-up process. Even against the background of the findings of the United Nations Special Commission, the IAEA safeguards system, with the necessary improvements, should remain the most credible guarantee of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Let me recall in this regard that the issue of prohibition of attacks on nuclear facilities was thoroughly discussed at the Fourth Review Conference of the NPT and enjoyed consensus in the draft final document of the Conference.

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

A credible legal prohibition on attacks is not to be considered as the ultimate booster of the cohesion of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. At the same time, it must be evident for both States parties and non-parties to the non-proliferation Treaty that in the long run the only countries to have a politically and legally justifiable claim for the protection of their facilities will be those which clearly renounce the nuclear option by fully honouring non-proliferation commitments, in particular through a strong and rigorous safeguards system.

A proposed approach to a possible solution of the issue is that the prohibition should cover attacks on nuclear facilities with the potential for causing mass destruction. This approach does not raise global problems and has the potential of being in line with the requirement of practical applicability because of the more limited number of such facilities. Of course, a number of basic questions concerning this line of thinking remain unanswered, the most important being how to define "mass destruction". A great deal of technical expert work is still to be done. We need a clearer picture of what might actually happen, in the very physical sense of that word, if a nuclear facility were attacked. Further study is needed of the characteristics of the potential radioactive pollution from such an attack. Attention must be paid to the task of analysing the short-term and long-term effects of radiation on humans as well. A definition of the term "mass destruction" that is acceptable both morally and practically can be drawn up only in the light of the results of such expert work.

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

Finally, let me address in a few words the question of an appropriate forum in which to prepare an agreement on the prohibition of attacks on nuclear facilities. In this regard, the importance of the Conference on Disarmament cannot be denied. I have already mentioned that the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament have produced many useful and promising ideas. Unfortunately, it seems to be the nature of the Conference on Disarmament that even the most promising ideas do not easily lead to consensus solutions on key issues. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that some countries do not share the opinion that the problem of a prohibition on attacks belongs to the realm of disarmament; rather, they consider it to be an issue of humanitarian law. In this regard, the coming, twenty-sixth, General Conference of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in late November and early December this year might offer a good opportunity to address the problem in a different environment. Though it remains our conviction that the ideal solution would be the convening of an independent diplomatic conference, the involvement of the ICRC could serve the genuine interests of other approaches as well, especially by making good use of the ICRC's experience in providing a framework for expert work. In the light of that, it seems to be advisable not to follow up until next year, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the relevant resolution adopted on the prohibition of attacks against nuclear facilities. Hopefully, that would enable all of us to take into consideration the new and positive developments so long awaited.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): Mr. Chairman, allow me at the outset to convey to you, in the name of my delegation, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. I am fully confident that your wise leadership and wide experience in international affairs will enable us to exchange views and to review all the issues of international security and disarmament in a manner that will lead to the achievement of the desired goals. I cannot fail to congratulate the two Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur on their election to participate in conducting the business of the Committee.

The political atmosphere of the Committee is increasingly indicative of a clarity in international relations, now that the dark clouds of the cold war are dispersing. We are able to witness the dawning of an era of harmony and peace in international relations. Cooperation, understanding and respect for the rights of peoples have replaced the confrontations, threats and disputes which used to threaten international peace and security. Also, the sword of Damocles of nuclear danger, which was hanging over all peoples on this planet, has now been lifted.

We view with optimism and gratification the agreement reached by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev to eliminate short-range nuclear missiles. That complemented the agreement on the elimination of intermediate-range missiles, which was the beginning of détente in international relations. Détente has brought about a radical transformation in the situation of numerous European States and societies. In the context of that transformation, those States and societies have taken steps that have no precedent in modern history. All this evolved in an atmosphere of peace and harmony that was totally different from

(Mr. Al-Ni'Mah, Qatar)

anything that took place in the past. This was no longer the sort of change that humanity used to bring about through bloody wars at great cost in human lives and material damage.

I do not believe that it would be mistaken to say that we have not yet reached the final destination of this march. I believe that what we are witnessing are the beginnings of incipient positive developments that will bring about a better world of peace and tranquillity and a climate that will be favourable to the elimination of hotbeds of tension and to the resolving of disputes that still rage in many parts of the world.

(Mr. Al-Ni'mah, Qatar)

It is noteworthy that the agreements which have been announced do not completely eliminate a number of problems. Nor do they extinguish the fires of conflicts that still threaten a number of regions in the world. This feeling was voiced quite clearly in the course of the meeting at the ministerial level of the non-aligned countries in Ghana a few weeks ago. Participants warned against over-optimism and stated that to ignore the fact that there remain problems which still await far-reaching solutions is to deviate from concrete reality. For unless we take account of this fact and search for solutions to those problems, we shall be moving towards the opposite of our ultimate goals in this Committee, namely arms reduction and eventual complete disarmament.

The atmosphere of cooperation and understanding we live in now makes it possible for us to face up to political, economic and social challenges. It is imperative to move forward from the stage of the constant and increasing contraction of the dangers that threaten international peace and security to a new stage of mutual confidence, that would make it possible to adopt unilateral or complementary measures without any previous agreement or negotiation. This will lead to the establishment of a new form of stability and security in the context of a new world security order.

Given this nuclear development, it is our view that it is a must, to continue to pay attention to and call for the continued reduction of nuclear weapons, the changing of the concept that arms and armaments are the basis of security and the reinforcement of the trend towards the reduction of nuclear weapons. The agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States of America on the reduction of the level of their nuclear weapons is a matter that leads to gratification. However, it cannot replace the need to pay

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attention to other important sides of nuclear disarmament, especially in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, as well as the regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons set up by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

It is also a source of gratification to learn that two of the nuclear Powers, namely France and China, have declared their intention to accede to the NPT, a matter that will lead to the completion of the accession of the known nuclear States to that Treaty. This, of course, will reinforce the non-proliferation regime. However, it also throws into relief the need to remedy the shortcoming in that regime. There is a lack of commitment by major Powers to the provisions of the NPT, which commitment calls for the fulfilment by the major Powers of their obligations under the Treaty.

We are not only of those who call for the reduction of nuclear weapons, but we also call for their complete elimination, so that the nuclear threat may disappear completely. We believe that this will require perseverance in the ongoing efforts in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to deal with the multiple aspects of nuclear armaments, such as the halting of nuclear tests, the search for effective measures that would guarantee the security of the non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or the use of nuclear weapons against them and the continuation of the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

Over the past few years, we have supported the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in many parts of the world. Proposals were made on that, including the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. The creation of such a zone is still one of the imperatives for the stability and security of the region, especially if we take into

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account that Israel still so far refuses to accede to the NPT and always refuses to subject all its installations to the international inspection regime under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency at a time when there is a stronger trend towards accession to the said Treaty.

We believe that the international community has a duty not to spare an effort in making the necessary arrangements to establish that zone as a contribution by the international community to the strengthening of the security of our region and the elimination of the nuclear dangers that threaten it. In this regard, it behoves me to refer to the fact that the latest developments concerning the holding of the peace conference on the Middle East in Madrid at the end of this month is cause for optimism: we hope that this conference will reflect favourably on the security of the region in a manner that would lead to strengthening the prospects of establishing that zone, to completing the quorum of accession to the NPT and to the elimination, once for all, of the nuclear dangers that threaten the region.

It is also noteworthy in this regard that the threat posed to the region does not arise only from nuclear weapons, but also from chemical weapons, which have greatly proliferated recently. We wish to commend here the progress made in the negotiations of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva towards agreement on the prohibition of chemical weapons. We hope that efforts will continue to reach agreement on the issue of verification, which an essential element in the aforementioned prohibition. We also wish to express our gratification, as the end of negotiation on that agreement is near at hand, now that the year 1992 has been set as a deadline for the conclusion of those negotiations.

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Interest in eliminating conventional weapons is worthy of full support because 80 per cent of arms expenditure, which exceeds $1,000 billion, is spent on conventional weapons. Therefore, we support conventional weapons reduction provided that this will not breach the security requirements of States for their legitimate self-defence in accordance with the Charter and in implementation of the final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly.

While we welcome, as a matter of principle, the study conducted by the Secretary-General in implementation of the request by the General Assembly concerning ways and means of reinforcing transparency in international transfers of conventional weapons, we consider that the proposal put forward by the Western countries and Japan to have a register of such transfers in the United Nations is still a matter for consideration and study by the various groups. We do hope that the final text will be compatible with the desired comprehensiveness of that register and with the principle of transparency. We also hope that it will be non-discriminatory and in the interest of all so that it may lead to a genuine reduction in conventional weapons, which in turn can be expected to reduce the stupendous outlays earmarked for armament.

Other consequences would include the strengthening of the whole disarmanent process and the consolidation of the relationship between disarmament and development. The processes of development, especially in the developing countries, cannot follow their natural course unless the necessary resources are made available for that purpose by releasing the money spent on the arms race.

The unfolding events on the international scene and the dawning of a new international order where security concepts have changed entail challenges

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that should be properly confronted. We maintain that the principle of multilateralism in dealing with international problems, as embodied in the United Nations, is the best way to ensure the cooperation of all the countries of the world in resolving international problems.

This is something that underlies international democracy and through which we shall realize the aspirations of peoples to contribute towards building a better world in which we shall witness the dawn of happiness, prosperity and tranquillity. The United Nations has an important, an essential and an effective role to play in achieving that end, and we therefore renew our wholehearted support for it in that endeavour. We will spare no effort towards that end.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): Let me, at the outset, convey to you, Sir, the congratulations of the delegation of Egypt on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. Your vast diplomatic and political experience and your well-known personal abilities will undoubtedly contribute most effectively towards the success of the Committee's work at this session. I should also like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau of the Committee on their election and wish both you and them every success.

My delegation would seize this opportunity to express its appreciation for the efforts and the excellent preparation of our deliberations in the First Committee by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General, and by the Department of Disarmament Affairs under his energetic guidance; and I congratulate Mr. Akashi on his statement.

During last year's general debate, the overwhelming majority of delegations expressed their optimism concerning the dramatic developments that

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had occurred in international relations. These developments were seen as heralding prospects for the end of a painful chapter in humanity's history in which the world had been preoccupied by confrontation and devastating conflict.

It is most gratifying, as we meet here today, to note the consolidation of this welcome process and its further advancement. This new spirit has manifested itself in substantial progress on the road towards achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament, thus paving the way to accelerated social and economic development and enhanced efforts to improve the welfare of mankind.

Egypt wholeheartedly welcomes the emphasis currently being given to the topic of disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular, which has gained momentum following the improvement in bilateral relations between the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

The recent signing - at the end of July 1991 - of the Strategic Arms Reduction (START) Treaty, in which the United States and the Soviet Union committed themselves to substantial reductions in their strategic long-range and intercontinental nuclear weapons, further strengthens the process of nuclear disarmament. This Treaty, together with the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), illustrate again that if political will is directed towards resolving long-standing obstacles much can be achieved. We welcome these two important agreements as additional steps on the arduous road towards achieving the ultimate objective of complete and total nuclear disarmament to which we aspire.

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In the same context, we highly commend the initiative of President Bush announced on 27 September 1991, and the positive reaction this initiative has received in the Soviet Union in the form of President Gorbachev's disarmament proposals. For the first time in decades, we are beginning to hear of an impending race, gradual as it is, to disarm, as opposed to an arms race. We are thus moving towards an era of mutual trust and confidence in which we see unilateral and complementary disarmament measures being adopted even without prior consultations or negotiations. We hope such a trend will become universal.

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The Egyptian delegation seizes this opportunity also to welcome the decision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) announced on 17 October to slash the Western alliance's nuclear arsenal in Europe by an additional 700 warheads and to destroy 50 per cent of the nuclear bombs that are being stockpiled in Europe for possible use aboard allied aircraft.

These new attitudes and initiatives concerning means of truly achieving both individual and collective security must blossom and spread their branches and their roots. It is also necessary to emphasize that the elimination of the continuing threat posed to the entire world by existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their ongoing refinement can be achieved only by the mutual efforts of the international community and with all States participating and contributing on a basis of equality.

Egypt's commitment to the goals and objectives of disarmament is a matter of record. We have reiterated at every opportunity that nuclear disarmament must definitely remain a subject of the highest priority on the international disarmament agenda. It remains our firm intention to pursue the ultimate goal of the elimination of the nuclear-arms threat, which still jeopardizes the very existence of humanity.

Though the primary responsibility for international nuclear disarmament must remain with the nuclear-weapon States, the importance of the multilateral approach to dealing with disarmament issues must be emphasized. Since the risks and dangers of maintaining weapons arsenals at their current levels is shared equally by all members of the international community, sharing in the necessary process that can contribute towards the total elimination of these risks and dangers should be clearly accepted as justifiable.

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At the same time, it is our considered opinion that global and regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and should be pursued simultaneously so as to promote regional and international peace and security. And, again in the regional context, due attention must be paid to the same priorities as those that apply to global disarmament.

Egypt has consistently supported all efforts directed towards regional disarmament as an important, indeed vital, element that can effectively reduce tension and mistrust between States. At the same time, we have always emphasized the importance of addressing not only the means but also the roots of both regional and international tensions. It is our view that a realistic approach to regional disarmament must clearly take account of the divergent characteristics of each particular region, and therefore specific modalities must be drawn up to meet the security concerns of all States belonging to a particular area accurately, justly and equitably.

We note with satisfaction the recent positive developments in international relations, which have contributed positively towards the reduction of tension in various hotbeds of regional conflict, thereby providing the necessary climate to address the issues of regional disarmament constructively and practically.

Egypt has been actively pursuing its ongoing initiatives for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East since 1974 in the context of the United Nations. In addition, President Mubarak proposed in April 1990 that the Middle East should be declared a region free of all weapons of mass destruction. These initiatives are directed primarily towards the goal of stemming the escalation of the crisis still gripping the Middle

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East region through concrete measures in the field of disarmament that would involve all States in the region without exception. These initiatives, without any doubt, provide for their security concerns, thereby getting rid of one of the major areas of friction and confrontation and opening the path to the placing of additional emphasis on means to facilitate a peace process that will lead to a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

The recent crisis in the Gulf has prompted a number of countries to make their own proposals on arms limitation and control - especially of arms of mass destruction - in the Middle East. In this area specific reference should be made with appreciation to the initiatives launched by President Bush and President Mitterrand.

Egypt has welcomed all initiatives designed to contribute to the promotion of international and regional stability and security and is committed to engaging in constructive dialogue and cooperation concerning such initiatives. In this connection, I should like to make reference to a letter addressed by the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Mr. Amre Moussa, to the Secretary-General in which he enumerated the basic elements which Egypt believes all regional disarmament proposals should include with a view to fulfilling their objectives. These are, inter alia, giving priority to ridding the region of weapons of mass destruction - namely, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons - and considering measures for conventional arms reduction when political circumstances permit.

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In addition, on 5 July 1991 Egypt announced, through a statement made by Foreign Minister Moussa, a series of additional ideas and proposals on the issue of regional disarmament in the Middle East. These proposals are, inter alia:

States of the Middle East which have not yet done so declare their commitment not to use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, not to produce or acquire nuclear weapons or nuclear material susceptible to military use and to dispose of any existing stocks of such material, and to accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime.

States of the region which have not yet done so declare their commitment to adhere to the non-proliferation Treaty as well as to the 1972 Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons no later than the conclusion of the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons being conducted by the Conference on Disarmament.

The Middle East States declare their commitment to address measures relating to all forms of delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction.

The nations of the region approve the assignment to an organ of the United Nations or other international organization of a role, to be agreed upon, in the verification of the agreement to be concluded.

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The developments in the Gulf region have focused the attention of a large number of States on the adverse consequences that the introduction of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East can inflict not only on the region but also on international peace and security. For this reason we have witnessed a growing tide of endorsements for both Egyptian initiatives. The most recent was recognized by the Security Council in its resolution 687 (1991) and by the five permanent members of the Security Council during the meeting of experts in Paris in July 1991. In the light of this increasing level of support, we feel that the time is ripe for concrete action to be taken in the appropriate international forums to implement President Mubarak's initiative through consultations with the interested parties.

Egypt continues actively to support the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament efforts aimed at the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Egypt welcomes the announcement by both China and France of their intention to accede to the Treaty and views this development as a major step that will further strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The same can definitely be said of the accession of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Zambia to the Treaty, and also of the declared intention of Angola and Namibia to accede to it. We hope that this important development will accelerate the denuclearization of Africa, bringing about its speedy implementation in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/56, which calls for a meeting of experts to be held in Addis Ababa during 1991. Denuclearization will have a marked effect on the security and stability of the African continent, providing its people with the opportunity to concentrate their efforts on achieving economic and social development.

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However, we should not overlook the importance of full disclosure by the Government of South Africa of its nuclear installations and materials in parallel with the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement signed between the Government of South Africa and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Director General of the Agency is requested to

"verify the completeness of the inventory of South Africa's nuclear installations and material"

in accordance with the Agency's General Conference resolution GC(XXXV)/RES/567, adopted in September 1991.

We also learned from the experience of the Gulf war and following the implementation of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) that the IAEA safeguard mechanism must be strengthened in order to ensure greater scope for detection of clandestine violation of the non-proliferation Treaty obligations. The overriding contribution of the non-proliferation Treaty regime to peace and security must not be challenged. That regime should be strengthened through complementary efforts.

We remain convinced that, in the absence of universal adherence to the non-proliferation Treaty, non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty are within their legitimate rights in demanding the strengthening of security assurances as provided by Security Council resolution 255 (1968), in order to offset this unfortunate situation.

In this connection, I must once again draw attention to the fact that the provisions of that Security Council resolution and the unilateral declarations by nuclear-weapon States do not provide, in our opinion, sufficient assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. We believe that this issue must take priority on the agenda for

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strengthening the non-proliferation regime as we draw closer to the 1995 cxnference on the future of the non-proliferation Treaty. For that purpose, Egypt presented a proposal to that effect to the Fourth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in Geneva in the summer of 1990.

Since then, several important developments have taken place. In particular, on 19 December 1990 the General Assembly adopted a single resolution - resolution 45/54 - on the issue of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Accordingly the Conference on Disarmament decided to re-establish, for the duration of its 1991 session, an Ad Hoc Committee to continue to negotiate with a view to reaching agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The debate demonstrated wide support for the Egyptian initiative. It has become imperative to plug all such loopholes in Security Council resolution 255 (1968) by adopting an updated version that would contain credible assurances.

The delegation of Egypt considered that a first step was necessary - that is, to initiate a process whereby nuclear-weapon States parties to the non-proliferation Treaty would conduct consultations collectively or individually with the nuclear-weapon States not currently parties to the Treaty on security assurances, taking into account Security Council resolution 255 (1968), and other States parties to the Treaty would be informed of any progress on appropriate action by the Security Council that might result from these efforts.

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It has been reassuring to us that various disarmament initiatives presented during this year have emphasized the necessity of universal adherence to the non-proliferation Treaty and the importance of applying the full-scope IAEA safeguard system as a reliable means of verification to ensure the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Israel's reluctance to comply with either of the two important elements I have referred to can further fuel suspicion in the region regarding its nuclear programme as well as its motivations. Such suspicion creates insurmountable stumbling blocks to progress in the field of regional disarmament and security in the Middle East.

On a more optimistic note, Egypt supported resolution GC(XXXV)/RES/571, adopted at the September 1991 session of the General Conference of IAEA, which affirmed

> "the urgent need for all States in the Middle East to ... accept the application of full-scope Agency safeguards to all their nuclear activities as an important confidence-building measure among all States in the region and as a step in enhancing peace and security in the context of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone".

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Hence, we call upon all States in the region to comply strictly and in good faith with the provisions of that resolution. Such compliance will diminish considerably the existing level of suspicion in the area and will enhance the peace prospects in the Middle East.

The convening, in January 1991, of the partial test-ban Treaty amendment Conference presented the overwhelming majority of the parties with an opportunity to voice their unabated commitment to the goal of a total cessation of all nuclear testing. The trend in the general debate reflected the depth of the international community's resolve to achieve a comprehensive test-ban treaty at the earliest possible time.

For many States - among them Egypt - achieving this goal would herald the establishment of a solid foundation for the total elimination of the devastating threat that nuclear-weapons arsenals present. It would spare the peoples of the world the grave consequences - whether political, economic or environmental - associated with continued testing. However, on the part of certain delegations, the political will necessary to the initiation of progress towards achieving a comprehensive test ban remained lacking.

I take this opportunity to welcome the recent decision of the Soviet Union - announced by President Gorbachev in early October 1991 - to unilaterally suspend all nuclear testing for a period of one year. We hope that other nuclear-weapon States will adopt similar decisions.

As Egypt is a member of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation would like to express its strong support for the statement made in this Committee by Ambassador Horacio Arteaga of Venezuela in his capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament. In addition, my delegation wishes to make some observations on some of the items on the agenda of the Conference.

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In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/55, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space concentrated its deliberations on various substantive aspects of this item. Egypt participated actively in these deliberations and intends to pursue its role when the Ad Hoc Committee resumes its work in 1992. Bearing in mind that the legal regime applicable to outer space does not, by itself, guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space, we hope that the Ad Hoc Committee will soon be able to adopt agreed legal provisions to complement the Moon Treaty.

The Egyptian delegation is encouraged by the progress made in the negotiations on the convention on the production, stockpiling and destruction of chemical weapons, which have entered their final phase. However, some issues remain to be settled before the 1992 deadline set for conclusion of the convention. The questions of verification, compliance with the provisions of the future convention, challenge inspection, and the composition and decision-making role of the Executive Council, as well as the venue of the organization, require further consideration. In elaborating a watertight verification regime - imperative as that is - the convention should not impede the use of chemical substances for peaceful purposes.

We wish at this stage to emphasize the legitimate interest of all States in ensuring that the economic and technological development of their chemical industries is not hampered. The flow of chemical technology, instruments and materials for the civilian chemical industries of various developing countries should be ensured. In brief, the verification mechanism should not place unnecessary burdens on civilian industries - particularly those of the developing countries.

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Egypt participates actively in the negotiations in Geneva on the chemical-weapons convention and hopes that it will achieve universal adherence. In this spirit, Egypt has called upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the biological-weapons Convention to do so before the conclusion and opening for signature of the chemical-weapons convention and, thus, ensure universal adherence to all international instruments relating to all weapons of mass destruction. By the same token, we welcome the Joint Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.

As a signatory to the biological-weapons Convention, Egypt participated, as an observer, in the Third Review Conference. The Egyptian delegation made a statement expressing its interest in having the provisions of the Convention improved, and followed closely the work of the Conference. We are satisfied that progress towards agreement on confidence-building measures has been achieved. On the question of verification, the Conference was unable to reach agreement, except on the establishment of a group of governmental experts to examine possible verification measures with a view to strengthening the Convention. Egypt believes that the lack of an effective verification regime is a loophole that should be seriously addressed, with a view to ensuring compliance by the States parties and the universality of the Convention.

Finally, I wish to address an issue that seems to be commanding a high degree of interest during this session - namely, the idea of establishing, under the auspices of the United Nations, a register of conventional-arms transfers. Greater emphasis has recently been accorded to the concept of

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military transparency and the means of achieving it in the various forums of the United Nations - in particular, the Disarmament Commission.

To date, there has been a wide divergence of views on the viability and effectiveness of the concept as a means of advancing the objectives of disarmament. Discussions have continued. I refer especially to discussions concerning the practicability of efforts to formulate measures, in the context of transparency, that might be applicable on a global basis, irrespective of the specific characteristics of different regions, the political realities that exist in those regions, and the legitimate security concerns of States belonging to them.

While we welcome in principle the proposal to establish an arms register, which might contribute positively towards achieving some of the objectives of disarmament, we feel that this proposal should be enlarged to cover all aspects of arms and technology transfers, production and stockpiling.

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Our initial reflection on the issue leads us to suggest that any register that was to serve the objectives of transparency in an equitable manner for all States should incorporate, inter alia, the following elements: first, all types of weapons, conventional as well as non-conventional, and their means of delivery; secondly, the transfer of technology, matériel, subsystems and so forth usable in the production and development of such weapons; thirdly, indigenous military production capabilities; and, fourthly, arms transferred and stockpiled as part of bilateral and regional cooperation agreements.

In view of the complicated nature of this issue, my delegation shares the view that measures should be taken at the earliest possible time to initiate an in-depth study of this important matter and that the largest number of Government experts should be invited to participate and express their opinions. Such an approach would certainly guarantee the transparency, universality and non-discrimination of any proposed mechanism, taking into account the priorities of disarmament as agreed upon and proceeding in a manner that would guarantee fully the security concerns of all States. Egypt is most eager to engage in constructive consultations with all members concerning the issue in an effort to reach agreement on the most practical means of advancing this proposal.

In expressing our position and views regarding the agenda items on disarmament we have been guided by the spirit of dialogue manifested in the new post-cold-war era, which ends an era of confrontation and moves forward on the path towards achievement of the goal of general and complete disarmament, established on the basis of the United Nations principles concerning the maintenance of international peace and security.

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Against that background the Egyptian delegation will cooperate with other delegations to ensure new progress in attaining that goal.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.